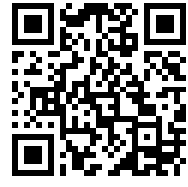
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

http://books.google.com



59
335
3



B 3 335 717

Digitized by Google




959
L9335
g

Digitized by Google

# GALLIO

UNIVERSITY OF UTRECHT

ST. JOHN LUCAS

Digitized by Google

# GALLIO

THE PRIZE POEM ON A SACRED SUBJECT

1908

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

BY

ST. JOHN LUCAS, M.A.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Oxford

B. H. BLACKWELL, 50 & 51 BROAD STREET

London

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO.

1908.

Digitized by Google

*"Non civium ardor prava jubentium . . .*
*Mente quatit solida."*

*Hor. Carm.* iii., 3.

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

# GALLIO.

---

To Lucius Annæus Seneca in Rome
Gallio his brother,—Cæsar's pro-consul
Where o'er the twain and hardly-sundered seas,
Ionian and Ægean, Acrocorinth
Stands sentinel,—gives greeting, and such news
As exiled life may offer, and good thanks
For memories that shine like motes of gold
In the slow-falling sand of empty days.

Thou knowest, brother,—who so well as thou,
Co-heir with me to learning?—how my soul
Burned, as a caged bird maddens for the woods
In April, to behold this land, this heaven
Unfolded golden in our boyish dreams,—
This Greece, the champion of the light divine
Against barbarian dimness that recoiled
As dark-plumed night sweeps smokewise from the sun;
This antique seat of Freedom and the Gods,

M49844

Digitized by Google

Whose forests yielded Argo, and whose mines
Gave the bronze beaks that tore the Persian's heart,
Swooping like greedy hawks, at Salamis;
This shrine, this nurse of heroes, whose least name
Haunted me like a passion,—not me alone;
But thou, my brother, whose yet youthful front
Glowed pale with Stoic brooding, and whose lips
Seemed carved austere in marble,—thou hast shared
This ecstasy. Dost thou remember yet
That breathless night upon the Palatine
In Cæsar's garden, where the jasmine gleamed
Faint in the dusk, and white moths drifted slow,
When we twain and the young Domitius
(Whom the Gods guard to prosper Rome and thee!)
Lay 'neath a moon whose tawny disk foretold
Vintage, and harvest-home; and o'er the hills
The dog-star burned like a revengeful eye?

How the whole scene comes back! I see the lad
His bright hair crowned with roses, lying prone,
Plucking with wilful fingers at the grass,
Turning anon to watch thy face; and thou,
Thy worn cheek resting on a hand too thin,
Bent o'er the scroll upon thy knees, that came
From Cæsar's house, the yellow vellum edged
With thick sea-purple. Not the lips of him

Digitized by Google

Who wrought and sang that deathless argument
Dwelt with more passion on their theme than thine;
O'er Hector dying and Patroclus cold,
And Priam, not more thick with tears his eyes
Whose name resounds like thunder of high floods;
Whose speech is like a vision of the sea.

But when thy voice failed, and the perfumed lamp
Died, and the moon waxed argent, and a breeze
Came softly, like the little timid ghost
Of some dead child, and stirred the cypresses;
The boy sprang suddenly from earth, and stood
Towering, like a beautiful young god,
And gazed on Rome, and shook his hair, and cried:
"O night and austere stars, and vagrant moon
Lured Latmos-ward, be witness of this vow:
Greece shall be free when I am Emperor!"
And thou, with dreamy eyes that looked to where
The Forum and its gleaming colonnades
Parodied Athens, raisedst thine arms to Heaven,
And spakest with sharp yearning in thy voice,
Homesick for lands unknown:—"To leave the glare
And clamorous magnificence of Rome!
The teeming games where virgins stare at blood,
The parasite, the patron, the dull crowd;
The spies that dog our path, suborned of him

Digitized by Google

Who grudges us our office; the formal life
Of courtiers; the recurrent spectacle
Of our triumphant consuls, haling home
Their load of skin-clad Dacians in chains,—
Untamed by wounds and hunger, yet aghast
At our hyæna-throng;—to leave it all,
And live a shepherd on the floral hills
Of Thessaly and brown Ætolia,
Or as the humblest pupil of the Porch,
Carry the Master's books; content to hear
Some fragment of his lore, content to see,
When the dawn swoops across Eubœa's heel,
The pale Pentelican quarries flash to gold!"
These were thy words. I held my peace and sighed.

And now thou tarriest yet in Rome, the friend
Of Cæsar, loved of all men, and that dream
Is yet untarnished; wherefore praise the gods.
But I, I praise them not for this desire
Fulfilled, who came to Greece a moon agone,
Faring from Ostia with Vulturnian wind
Past the swart brood of Liparean isles
And fell Charybdis, and the lovely heir
Of Grecian flowers and songs forgot in Greece,—
Thyme-scented Sicily;—thence o'er the dark
Wide-heaving bosom of a dreamy sea

Digitized by Google

Sped by propitious gales, till I beheld,
Black and sharp-edged against the dawn, like giants
Who guard infernal flame, rugged and vast,
Leucadia, Zacynthos, Ithaca,
And pale beyond them in a morning mist,
Hellas. No Fate can rob me of that hour.
O violet hills and sea, and deathless names
Of cities, and dim haunts of sylvan gods!
But for this Corinth, brother, 'tis a place
That the sun laughs to see, a gaudy tomb
Haunted by peevish ghosts, a wilderness
Of formal streets and tenements, once held
By veterans of the divine Julius,
And now by their base offspring; with a herd
Of men called Greeks, vain, unstable like sand,—
A mongrel throng from Macedon and Thrace,—
A barking rabble of Jews; my subjects these!
Poor heritors of the great-thewed clan that launched
The earliest trireme on a startled wave,
Those keen Corinthian sea-hawks who enserfed
Corcyra, famed in rowers, and shook the pride
Of Athens and her admirals! All the day
I sit in audience, striving to adjust
The balance of their lightness, listening
To the same dull reiterated tale:
How Greek robbed Roman, Roman battered Greek,

Digitized by Google

And Jew pounced on the booty whilst they fought.
Only at eve, when from inferior slopes
Acrocorinthian, gazing north, I see
Helicon, and the rich Crisæan plain,
My soul revives; the soul of Greece respires
In the dead lovely body of this land;
I dream old pageants and am comforted;
Yet briefly, since returning I behold
Some hollow lonely temple all deflowered
By brutal Mummius and his legionaries;
A shrine where gleams amid luxuriant briars
The perfect arm of some dishonoured god,
Or, built into a wall, the rain-worn brow
Of Aphrodite. Like a yellow beast
The city crouches in the sunset glow,
Naked and haggard. Ah! not in such haunts
She lingers, Love's bright queen!

. . . . .

I had ended here
My tale of disillusion, and filled the page
With idle speech of books; but that one word
Recalls not thee alone and thy grave brow,
Brother and firmest friend! An alien face,
Vivid as thine, less wan with knowledge, gleams
Pale in the growing amethyst of dusk,—

Digitized by Google

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



His face that, eager as thin altar-flame
Fed with crushed gums and powdered Orient herbs,
Flared when his stammering speech waxed plain with love;
His face, his face, beneath whose light my soul
Saw herself judged, her philosophic robe
Shrivelled; her dismal weed of self-esteem
Burnt in the steady flame of those great eyes.
The man was fire, all fire!
Let me describe
The event,—a nothing,—since I fail to draw
The figure of its master; 'twas a farce,
Type of the petty feuds that make accursed
This paradise of wranglers. Thou must know
That ere the acclamation died which hailed
Cæsar's proconsul, I was straitly warned
Of certain dues expected by the mob
From the new deputy; my forerunners
Had been most wise in this; briefly, 'twas hoped
I should play pandar to the law, and lean
A partial finger on its rising scale.
The test came ere three suns were dim. The Jews,
Confident in their influence and my fear,
Beset the seat of judgment, as a swarm
Of thirsty wasps a fruit, and in their midst
One man, their prisoner, staunch as a rock

Digitized by Google

In some discordant sea; his lion's head
Thrown backward, and in his unshifting eyes
Nor hate nor fear, only a royal calm.
But once he glanced at me, when, having stilled
Some portion of the tumult, I required
His name, and answered: "Paul, the least of those
Who preach Christ crucified." Then all the Jews
Cried at him with fierce mouths, and Sosthenes
Their priest, that dark fanatic: "He hath bewitched
Crispus the ruler of our synagogue,
Deserter to this Christ, and would destroy
Our ancient worship, leading men to God
By strange unlawful paths." At once the throng,
Snarling like famished wolves, flashed up to me
A glare of tawny faces, and I read
Plain in their eyes the insult of their hope.
Then, for my blood was warm with this affront
To Roman honour, I said: "So vague a charge
Concerns me not; speak, hath the man done aught
Subtly against his neighbour or the State?
Hath he stolen or used violence?" They answered:
"Nay, but he worships falsely." And the throng
Was silent, and this Paul stood, passing calm,
Waiting my leave to plead. But I, enraged
Less by their insolence than sick at heart
To see a good man so beset by fools,

Digitized by Google

Cried: "Think you god-like Cæsar sent me hither
As fountain of your law, to hold debate
Of washing pots, of clean and unclean meats,
To back your private quarrels, to unleash
The hydra of your custom at the throat
Of him who grieves you? By my staff, not thus!
If this man have indeed blasphemed your god,
Look ye to it, and seek not aid from Rome.
Dogs, do ye dare to whimper? Ho, my guards,
Whip me this rabble from the judgment seat!"

The most part went in fear, but Sosthenes,
Agrin with rage, shook fists at me, and cried
Strange curses; then the idle throng of Greeks,
No lovers of this sect, and swift to take
The popular wind, laid angry hands on him.
I let them brawl.
So vile a comedy,
Thou sayest, deserves oblivion; and indeed
I had forgotten all the paltry scene
But for that face. Is it not strange, O brother,
That in this feverish moment men call life,
This narrow ray betwixt the dark and dark,
A thousand features that we love or loathe
Shine, pass, and are forgotten, or remain
Blurred in the soul's false mirror, till there comes,

Digitized by Google

Terrible, without warning, like a fierce
Amazing star that changes night to noon,
The Master-face! This Paul the Christian,
This sword-blade man worn lean and dark with strife,
This dreamer and mad poet, frenzy led
Across the grim sea of a world's contempt
Full-sailed to the sharp reefs of shameful death,—
He was my star! 'Twas he for whom my soul
Had waited long in loneliness; his brow
Was smooth with some strange peace that I had sought,
Blindfold, since birth; all other men were ghosts;
He, he alone was vital! Thou and I,
Yea, all who yearn for truth beneath the sun,
Dig in the painful sand, perchance to find
Some tiny runnel from her central fount,
But he hath found the source! Her's is the road
That strikes straight up to heavenly perfectness,
But we have sown it with a thousand briars
And gaudy growths of falsehood, and are lost;
He is not lost, in whose triumphant eyes
Burns calm the perfect knowledge, the great hope,
The love that heals the red wounds of the world!

He hath departed hence to Syria.
I had no speech with him; I have no hope
To see him any more; death follows him

Digitized by Google

Like his own shadow, and as little marked.
But ere he went, I found the means to hear
His voice, and, muffled, mid a humble throng
Of slaves and rustic hinds, to look farewell
On that great brow. The scanty ritual o'er,
Most quietly he spake, as doth a father
To his assembled sons; and while the words
Came halting from his lips, he smiled, like one
Who sees a steady vision that proclaims
Health for an old, mad earth, and knows all else
Dross, save that health. "For though I speak," he said,
" With tongues of men and angels, lacking Love
My voice is tuneless brass and jangled bells;
And though I prophesy, and comprehend
All mysteries and all knowledge, and possess
Faith that uproots the mountains, without Love
I am as nought; and though my hands bestow
All treasure on the poor; yea, though I give
This body to the fire, yet without Love
It profiteth me nothing." Then he told
How Love was kind, long-suffering, no envier,
Not boastful, not self-seeking; calm and wise,
Rejoicing in the truth; and last he spake
Of some great vision of the truth through Love,
When we, who see as in a darkened glass
Her shadow, shall behold her face to face . . .

Digitized by Google

I heard no more. The Greek boy plucked my cloak;
'Twas thought the Jews had seen me enter there.
Life and its cares returned; I stole away
For ever from that presence.
He is gone
Almost unheard, yet wherefore should I grieve
Who learnt his secret ere his lips had moved?
This Love, become a fire to burn up lies,
A sword against the cruel, a swift shaft
To pierce the flank of evil; Love, the germ
Of the huge tree whose limitless boughs shall breathe
Peace to the aching heart of all the earth.
O thou, most dear of men that live, my brother!
Thou knowest the strange heralds chosen of Truth;
What if this were the long-sought remedy
For all the blind confusion of our days,
Our wretched strifes, our grey and hopeless deaths!
What if the dawn at last devour the dark!

. . . . .

Night falls like rain athwart the smoke-hued sea,
The fisher's tiny lamp shines out. Alas,
Had those wise Greeks not missed the light, but seen
Even as this poor man, with such clear eyes,

Digitized by Google

That gleam of hope across their desperate joy!
Had Rome, our murderous daughter of the Wolf,
Whose feet are thick with blood, been heir to this!
Thou deemest me bewitched? Nay, hadst thou known
The magic of the man;
I prithee send
News of our young Domitius, whom I greet.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Gaylamo
Pamph
Binde
Gaylord Br
Stockton,
T. M. Reg. U. S

M49844
L9335
6
Lucas, St. John W. L.
Gallio,

M49844

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google